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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a brief history of the Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority campaign against humanism in public school education. The document describes the successful textbook evaluation strategies of Mel and Norma Gabler of Texas, on which Dr. Falwell relies heavily, and lists 20 organizations protesting textbooks, library books, and reference books, along with 40 subjects which they oppose. Among the 40 targets of protest are sociology, anthropology, the humanities, world history that mentions the United Nations, black literature, profanity, violence, human development programs, and assignments that lead to self-awareness and self-understanding and help students make value judgments. The document concludes with a discussion of some oversights by teachers that have helped to foster censorship attitudes and some strategies for countering these attitudes. (HTH)

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Forty Targets of the Textbook Protesters

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In late April of 1979, the Reverend Jerry Falwell launched a new phase of his Clean Up America campaign. An estimated fifteen thousand Christian "activists" from twenty-six states joined Dr. Falwell in Washington, D.C., "to inaugurate the forceful escalation of the national effort to restore decency to the U.S." In that speech, Dr. Falwell told his followers: "In school textbooks, pornography, obscenity, vulgarity and profanity are destroying our children's moral values in the guise of 'value clarification' and 'sex education.' Our children are being trained to deny their 200-year heritage. We must rise up in arms to throw out every textbook" that seeks to deny children their American heritage.

According to Patrick Robinson's report in the May 14, 1979 issue of Spotlight, five United States senators (Harry Byrd, Jesse Helms, Gordon Humphrey, Paul Laxalt, and John Warner) and two representatives (George Hansen and Tom Kindness) endorsed Dr. Falwell's CUA campaign by appearing with him at the rally.

The founder of the Moral Majority, Dr. Falwell is the pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, but his fame as a powerful evangelical

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This is the text of a speech delivered at the First National Conference of School Library Media Specialists in Louisville, Kentucky, September 27, 1980; at the annual convention of the Ohio Educational Library/Media Association in Cleveland, Ohio, October 4, 1980; at the annual convention of the Ohio Council of the International Reading Association in Columbus, Ohio, October 10, 1980; at the annual convention of the South Dakota Education Association in Aberdeen, S.D., October 15, 1980; and at the annual conference of the Indiana Speech Association in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 31, 1980.

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minister is not limited to his church and to his college at Liberty Mountain. Dr. Falwell has a television and radio congregation of millions who tune into his "Old Time Gospel Hour." He has devoted followers from coast to coast who have heard him say on several occasions, as I have: "We must bring immoral public education to its knees." The way to do that, he has said, is to build at least one thousand conservative Christian schools each year. In his speech from the Capitol steps, he said: "The key to U.S. strength is Christian morality." He pointed out that in 1961 there were a mere fourteen hundred conservative Christian academies in the United States. Today, he said, there are fourteen thousand such schools, and three new ones are being founded every day. At that rate, Dr. Falwell said, by 1992 the number of conservative Christian schools will equal the number of public schools.

Dr. Falwell and thousands of like-minded citizens apparently believe there is little hope for the public schools since they complain that most teachers preach the religion of secular humanism and use humanistic textbooks. The specter of secular humanism looms large in the literature distributed by scores of state, national, and local organizations critical of the public schools. At least a dozen of the protesting organizations have distributed the same definition of humanism, part of which is quoted here:

> Humanism is faith in man instead of faith in God. Humanism was officially ruled a religion by the U.S. Supreme Court. Humanism promotes: (1) situation ethics, (2) evolution, (3) sexual freedom, including public sex education courses, and (4) internationalism.
>
> Humanism centers on "self" because it recognizes no higher being to which man is responsible. Thus there is much emphasis in public education on each child having a "positive self-concept." The child

must see a good picture of himself. This eliminates coming to Christ for forgiveness of sin. It eliminates the Christian attributes of meekness and humility. Where does self-esteem end and arrogance begin?

Such terms as self-concept, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-understanding, self-actualization, body-awareness, etc. are frequently used. All leave the students occupied primarily with themselves and this is wrong. There are others to consider. Self-centered persons are seldom an asset to themselves, to their friends, family, or country.

In an article in Journal Champion, Dr. Falwell noted that "textbook writers are humanists and evolutionists. They are committed to a man-centered philosophy of life and they deny the existence of God." Dr. Falwell added: "Our textbooks deceive our young people about premarital sex, about the role of the father and the mother in the home, and even about history." To support his contention, Dr. Falwell cited a 1953 history textbook in which the writer called the Allied Forces of World War II the "United Nations" forces. According to Dr. Falwell, the "writer was so committed to one-world government, that he could not objectively see history. The United Nations was not established until after World War II. We should be angry with our school textbooks because they push socialism and one-world government. They make democracy look ridiculous and socialism look appealing."

In writing the article for Journal Champion, Dr. Falwell relied heavily on the textbook reviews prepared by Norma and Mel Gabler, the founders of Educational Research Analysts in Longview, Texas. The Gablers proudly announced to their following in April of 1979 that Dr. Falwell "has asked us to supply resource material to alert Americans nationwide about the damage being done by humanistic

textbooks. Since even many committed Christians do not recognize that the textbook situation is so desperate, we believe this wide exposure could be one of God's most powerful instruments to inform the Christian community!"

The Gablers, their paid staff, and a corps of volunteers provide concerned citizens throughout the nation with reviews of virtually all textbooks used in the United States. The Gablers also provide their followers with strategies for approaching the schools about objectionable books and with materials published by other protesting organizations. A person who sends an initial request to the Gablers for reviews may receive these two paragraphs in the package, since they seem to be a vital part of the Gabler creed:

> Until textbooks are changed, there is no possibility that crime, violence, VD, and abortion rates will do anything but continue to climb.
>
> Textbooks mold nations because textbooks largely determine how a nation votes, what it becomes and where it goes.

The Gablers prepare extensive bills of particulars in which they object to specific words or passages in textbooks that have been submitted for adoption in Texas. They are highly successful with their protests. For example, in August of 1978, the Gabler objections in their bills of particulars helped the Texas Commissioner of Education decide to reject eighteen of the twenty-eight series of textbooks submitted for adoption. And that high percentage of rejection is not unusual as a result of the Gablers' extensive homework and their countless objections to "humanistic" textbooks.

Probably not more than a handful of the more than two hundred national, state, and local protesting organizations are not familiar with the Gabler reviews and

strategies. Not all of the organizations apparently agree with all of the Gablers' objections, but a high percentage -- from coast to coast -- rely on the Gablers' materials when they protest textbooks at the local level or when they conduct statewide meetings to encourage parents to start their own conservative academies.

The protesting organizations rise at the local level for a variety of reasons. Some form because they are unhappy with a particular book, such as The Catcher in the Rye or Go Ask Alice, and they may dissolve as soon as that book is removed from a school library or as soon as they learn that the school board will not remove it. Others use a single book as a starting point, and they expand their scope to attack a variety of school materials. Still others form to stop ERA or the Panama Canal Treaty, and they begin examining the schools as a source of all problems. And a great number organize to express their complete displeasure with the "humanistic schools" and their textbooks.

Time prohibits my naming all of the organizations that have protested textbooks, library books, and reference books; but here are the names of twenty representative organizations:

American Education Association (AEA), New York City

American Christians in Education (ACE), Culver City, California

Citizens Advocating a Voice in Education (CAVE), Atlanta, Georgia

Citizens Committee on Education, Pinellas County, Florida

Citizens United for Responsible Education (CURE), Montgomery County, Maryland

Concerned Citizens and Taxpayers for Decent School Books, East Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Concerned Parents of Monticello, Iowa

The Eagle Forum, Alton, Illinois

Guardians of Education for Maine (GEM), Camden, Maine

The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Indiana Home Circle, Bloomington, Indiana

Interfaith Committee Against Blasphemy, Wyoming, Michigan

Let's Improve Today's Education (LITE), Peoria, Arizona

The National Congress for Educational Excellence (NCEE), Dallas, Texas

The Network of Patriotic Letter Writers, Pasadena, California

Parents of Minnesota, Inc., Bloomington, Minnesota

Parents of New York - United (PONY-U), Clarence, New York

Parents Rights, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri

People of America Responding to Educational Needs of Today's Society (PARENTS), Kenosha, Wisconsin

Young Parents Alert, Lake Elmo, Minnesota

What do the protesting organizations oppose? I will name forty targets gleaned from the reading of several thousand pages of protest material and from the reading of reports of censorship incidents throughout the nation. Not all organizations are opposed to all forty items. But a few oppose all forty and a score more.

1. sex education
2. drug education
3. values clarification
4. the study of psychology and the use of psychological principles in teaching
5. sociology
6. anthropology

7. the humanities
8. ecology
9. world geography -- if there's mention of one-worldism
10. world history -- if there is mention of the United Nations
11. ethnic studies
12. literature written by homosexuals
13. black literature
14. novels that deal with conflicts between parents and their children
15. basal readers with many pictures and drawings
16. the so-called dirty words in dictionaries and all books
17. profanity
18. violence
19. books that do not champion the work ethic
20. books that do not promote patriotism
21. books that do not promote the family unit as the basis of American life
22. mythology
23. stories about pagan cultures and life styles
24. books and stories that "defame" historical figures by revealing their weaknesses
25. "trash" -- The Catcher in the Rye, Go Ask Alice, Black Boy, Flowers for Algernon, etc.
26. works of "questionable" writers including Langston Hughes, Dick Gregory, Ogden Nash, Richard Wright, Joan Baez, and Malcolm X
27. phase-elective English programs
28. revisionist histories

29. materials that contain negative statements about parents
30. books that contain any print that is not horizontal and reads from left to right
31. role playing
32. sensitivity training
33. behavior modification
34. subjects that cannot be classified as basic
35. assignments that lead to self-awareness and self-understanding
36. situation ethics
37. assignments that help students make value judgments
38. human development programs
39. the occult
40. stories about the supernatural, magic, witchcraft, etc.

The protesting organizations have every right to complain in a democratic society, and they can fully expect to be heard. However, they should also expect to have many of their objections challenged by teachers, administrators, and publishers -- particularly when their protests are politically and religiously motivated or when their objections lack substance or validity.

A woman who has studied censorship for a long time told me that one of the favorite strategies of several organizations is to attack on a very broad front, calling attention to a host of evils. By doing so, this woman believes, the organizations can completely disarm the teachers and administrators and badger them into giving in on one or two items. Once a school system has done so, there is no stopping the protest groups.

As we become increasingly aware of the fact that censorship is on the rise and

that many organizations are unhappy with today's schools, we, as teachers and administrators, must accept some of the blame for the attacks on the schools, the teachers, and the materials. We have not always chosen our textbooks and our outside readings wisely and well. We have not always explained to our students what we want them to do and why. We have not always taken time to explain adequately to parents what a new course or program is about. We have sometimes been condescending to parents or have ignored them or have resorted to jargon in our explanations. (Several groups have said they formed because teachers and administrators would not listen to them or put them down.) We have not always provided alternate readings or alternate assignments for books and projects that are controversial. We have not always taken the time to let all sides of an issue be explained and be considered. We have not always taken the time to support teachers who are under attack and to help them in their confrontations with protesters.

I could go on. There are more things that we -- and please note that I said we -- have done or have not done to anger parents and students. We know what those things are, and we must try to avoid repeating as many of them as possible.

But above all, I think we must do several things immediately. The first is to launch a public relations campaign in which we carefully explain what we think education is all about. We need to explain our courses, our methods, our total curriculum. We need to admit that we have problems -- such as violence and vandalism in some schools -- and seek help and advice from parents for coping with them. We need to involve more and more parents in our decisions about textbooks and the curriculum. We need to explain what standardized tests can and cannot do. Finally we need to join forces with as many people as we can to talk with the protesters, to try to reason with them, and to make the community aware of the nature of their protests.